A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE

LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL,

IN

THE ABBEY CHURCH WESTMINSTER,

ON

MONDAY, JANUARY 30, 1775:

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED TO BE OBSERVED AS THE DAY OF

THE MARTYRDOM OF KING CHARLES I.

BY BROWNLOW LORD BISHOP OF WORCESTER.

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Die Martis, 31° Januarii, 1775.

ORDERED, by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament aſſembled, that the thanks of this Houſe be, and are hereby given to the Lord Biſhop of WORCESTER for the Sermon by him preached before this Houſe Yeſterday, in the Abby Church *Weſtminſter*.—And that he be deſired to cauſe the ſame to be forthwith printed and publiſhed.

ASHLEY COWPER,

Cler. Parliamentor.

PHILIPPIANS, IV. 5.

LET YOUR MODERATION BE KNOWN UNTO ALL MEN.

CHRISTIANITY hath left untouched the civil rights and liberties of mankind. It admits indeed the power of the magiſtrate, as reſulting from that ſubordination of rank, which is eſſential to the condition of man. Yet no where authoriſes the name or form of that power, by any ſanction or preference of its own. They are equally deceived, who would attempt to raiſe on ſcriptural foundations, a ſyſtem of deſpotic authority, or democratic freedom. Theſe with the various modifications of government, may any of them ſubſiſt in a Chriſtian country, and the way to ſalvation ſhall be found in all.

But

But hath Chriſtianity then forgotten to regulate the public and ſocial conduct of mankind? far otherwiſe. As knowledge in religion is the true baſis of virtue amongſt men, the increaſe of that knowledge will operate as an encreaſe of their virtue. The peculiar diſtinction of a people enlightened by the Goſpel is this; that they are filled with an higher ſenſe of the ſeveral duties which belong to them. The general principles of morality confirmed, and ſanctified by the weight and authority of Revelation, acquire a new influence and force over their minds, and are thenceforth adopted as the more clear and indiſputable rules for the regulation of their conduct.

With reſpect to civil government therefore (be the form of its conſtitution what it may) it hath its ſhare in the beneficial influence of our religion; deriving freſh aſſurances of ſupport from the new ſanctions therein added to the love of juſtice, humanity, and peace. The ſame excellent precepts which guide and govern us in one inſtance, will actuate our conduct throughout, as well in all the public and ſocial, as in the private, and more limited concerns of life.

In canvaſſing offences of a public nature, committed by an individual, or by numbers, this obſervation is exceedingly material; as the guilt of them muſt in reaſon be meaſured, by a ſcale proportioned to our attainments in morality, civil policy and religion. I am ſorry to add, it is an obſervation, painful in its application to the ſubject before us, as it caſts a moſt unfavourable ſhade on the ſcenes of national tumult and diſorder, for the guilty conſequences of which, we are now met to humble ourſelves before GOD.

If under heathen governments, in ages leſs informed, diſturbers of the public peace, have been held in deteſtation and horror, how ſhall we ſpeak of thoſe, who in a country far advanced in policy, long bleſſed with the light of Chriſtianity, and aſſiſted with all the virtuous improvements which that excellent ſyſtem of precepts hath introduced, yet offended at once in violation of civil duty, moral obligation, with the known and expreſs laws of GOD.

In conſidering the troubles of this unhappy period, I wiſh not to raiſe queſtions of fact, or to ſuggeſt uncertain

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cauſes for the ſeveral events, on which minds framed to party may ruminate, or heated imaginations cavil and diſpute; but with ſerious attention to the duty which becomes us on this day, to point out ſuch reflexions upon them, as ſhall mortify the vanity and pride of man; teach him that humility is the beſt ornament of his public character; and that all his ſelfiſh and narrow views ſhould be as nothing, when compared with the more important concerns of the national, and common intereſt.

Hiſtory hath not its uſe, if we are unable to look diſpaſſionately on times and tranſactions ſo remote from our own, and profit by the inſtruction which they convey. But we are eſpecially, the very dupes of prejudice, if we can ſuffer our minds to be agitated by an enquiry, ſo ill ſuited to the preſent period of maturity at which our conſtitution is arrived; with all its principles, and all its powers now thoroughly defined and underſtood. We are the very dupes of prejudice, if we are blind to remark, that as the ſeveral ages of our hiſtory are diſtinguiſhed by their ſeveral characters, error and ignorance confounding the one, religious bondage, and ſuperſtition another, vice and infidelity a third,

moderation,

moderation, and peace, with a full enjoyment of our rights both civil and religious, are the ſpecial bleſſing of our own.

In reſpect to the ſubject of this day's humiliation, I ſhall reaſon as between a monarch, and his people; obſerving that a wide field of inſtruction is laid open to them both. Experience grounded upon fact, will teach them the due application of my text to their reſpective pretenſions and claims, that it is a maxim of general import in all the intereſts and concerns of men; an eſſential rule of life, a dictate of true morality, a ſuggeſtion of ſound policy, as well as a precept of our pure religion.

The ſubject ſeems properly to preſent itſelf in two different views; firſt, as a parliamentary conteſt, which diſturbed the beginning of this prince's reign, and in which the foundation of all his ſubſequent troubles was laid; ſecondly, the unhappy troubles themſelves. Two uſeful, and inſtructive inferences being ſeverally ſuggeſted to our minds by this diviſion; the one, as we are ſubjects of our much envied

civil conſtitution, the other, as we are members of our excellent church eſtabliſhed.

In reſpect then to the firſt, confidence and a good underſtanding between a monarch and his people, are eſſential to the happineſs of both. Exceſſive claims on either ſide will create diſtruſt. When once exorbitant pretenſions are ſet up, all fair reaſoning is put aſide. They are alike expoſed to the exaggeration and falſehood, which wit and malice are ever ready to ſuggeſt, to render their exceſſes more ſuſpected by each other. And it is through a train of ſorrow, and diſtreſs, through a long continued courſe of trouble and diſtraction, that they muſt at laſt arrive at the plain political truth, that each are loſers by the conteſt, that their intereſts are perfectly conſiſtent, placed in the ſame point, unanimity, temper, and forbearance.

This is the firſt and natural ſource from whence the troubles of King Charles aroſe. Impartiality requires us to confeſs, that during the earlier parts of this prince's reign, his natural diſpoſition inclined him rather to the encreaſe, than the diminution of his prerogative. However juſtly we

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may reſt the defence of the king himſelf, on the ground of his education, the ill-directed influence of an hereditary council, the unſettled ſtate of the conſtitution, with the powers inherent in its ſeveral branches undefined, and ill-underſtood; for indeed it is obvious, that on its ripening into perfection at the union of the two long contending Houſes, when it then moſt eſpecially ſtood in need of a ſucceſſion of mild and moderate princes, it met with a very different fate; and had been kept in a continual ferment, diſturbed by a variety of material changes in reſpect both to government and religion; I ſay, however juſtly we may reſt the defence of the king himſelf, on theſe and other grounds of the like nature, yet the public and political conſequence was the ſame. A reciprocal diſregard aroſe in the minds of the people, to the juſt prerogative of the crown. Suſpicion once created, a cool and reaſonable diſcuſſion of rights was no longer to be looked for. The evil ſpirit of diſſention led on both the Court and the Parliament to the mutual encreaſe of their pretenſions over each other. The natural conſequence of deſerting the juſt medium of their claims was this, that they both ran into unjuſtifiable extremes.

Admitting

Admitting therefore the fair grounds on which the Parliament had built their complaints, giving way to the reaſons upon which their oppoſition was framed, we may yet on the other hand confeſs, that they were improvident, and ill adviſed, as to the manner of purſuing their redreſs; forgetting the great queſtions of political danger, which ever threaten the incautious uſe of ſuch expedients, as they then adopted. They reflected not how naturally a prince, under the continual preſſure of undue reſtraint, is driven to ambitious and unconſtitutional deſigns. They remembered not the alarming inſtances, which might fairly have been deduced from the annals of our own country, as well of the poverty of the king, as of the draining of the people. But they were in fact miſled; and it had fallen to the lot of ill deſigning perſons to execute, what honeſt men began.

It is certain therefore, that the neceſſities of the king ſhould now take their ſhare, in ſupporting the burden of calumny, with which his inclination had been hitherto charged. It is not poſſible indeed, to conceive too highly of that exemplary diſplay of public virtue, that patriotic

love

love for the liberties of the people, manifeſted by individuals, in their noble, and diſintereſted oppoſition to the abuſes which followed. Their names and examples will be honoured, and revered, ſo long as the memory of this unhappy conteſt remains. But it was now too late to expect, that either the virtue of a few individuals, or the king's repentance of his error, which I am perſuaded experience had wrought upon his mind, ſhould reſtore peace to the wounded conſtitution. The ſoil had been long preparing, the ſeeds of future trouble were now ſown, and encouraged in their growth by the diſtruſt which the prince, and his parliament had irreconcileably conceived towards each other.

In all conteſts between the ſeveral branches of government, this alarming circumſtance is found; that there is no one to moderate between them. As the troubles encreaſe, the friends of peace and order are dragged into the diſpute, and compelled to take their part. When each ſide grows ſuſpicious of the other, neutrality becomes a crime againſt them both. At length when the diviſion is wrought up to its higheſt pitch; when parties are arran-

ged, their reaſon hoodwinked, and their paſſions inflamed, there is no earthly judge between them. They muſt decide their own difference, having no other poſſible means of doing it than that of power. The unrelenting ſpirit of the parliament, with the perhaps miſtaken firmneſs of the king, gave occaſion to lengthen the conteſt, till this dreadful alternative aroſe; and the whole kingdom was expoſed to the ſucceſſion of calamities which attend it.

Here then I ſhall reſt, as to the ground of the diſpute, and ſuggeſt the political inſtruction which it conveys. The ſorrows which encompaſſed this unhappy king, were derived by a gradation of conſequences, from the mutual diſtruſt which he, and his people had conceived towards each other. Did he incline to the encreaſe of his prerogative, he was as certainly brought to the conviction of his error, before any ſteps of open violence had been taken, on the part either of himſelf, or of his parliament. But common juſtice was then denied to every meaſure he propoſed, and common credit to his profeſſions. A variety of private intereſts, pointing at their ſeveral objects, had now formed themſelves throughout the kingdom. Some who had been

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in ſecret fomenting the diviſions of the ſtate, ſaw their ambitious projects advanced by their encreaſe, and found account in the continuance of theſe troubles. If ſome ſuſpected the ſincerity of the king, others now pretended to ſuſpect it, and ſucceeded in the too eaſy taſk of ſpreading and confirming their ſuſpicions amongſt the people.

We learn then the neceſſity of a ſtrict adherence to the true, and acknowledged principles of the conſtitution, that whilſt we are firmly maintaining the juſt powers which belong to the ſeveral branches of government, we harbour not an overweaning thirſt after that which the public intereſt hath placed in other hands. Throughout the remoter ages of our hiſtory, from the memorable wars of the Barons, the civil diſcord, tumults and inſurrections which diſturbed the reigns of our earlier princes, even to the unhappy ſcenes we are now lamenting, we have abundant reaſon to learn, that there is no encreaſe of happineſs to be derived, from the luxuriance of power in the hands of the ſubject. The treaſons and rebellions which harraſſed a neighbouring kingdom, before its union with our own, with the frequent depoſition and murder of its kings, ſhew manifeſtly on the

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other hand, how little princes or their ſubjects profit by unwarrantable pretenſions on the part of the crown. The happy conſtitution of this country is formed by the ſacrifice of claims, which each of them hath made to law, to reaſon, and to religion. It is now the common and fundamental intereſt of both, that they exerciſe their ſeveral powers, by the known and uniform direction of juſtice, and moderation in their judicial capacity; and in their legiſlative, by the rules of policy and public good. The parliament on the one hand, deſpiſing the inſinuations of thoſe, who would too highly exalt their authority; and the prince as little regarding the deceitful enemies of his peace, who by flattering ſuggeſtions would raiſe him above his relative obligations. Jealouſy and ſuſpicion laid aſide, temper and love ſhould unite them in all their intereſts and deſigns; the parliament defending the juſt prerogative of the crown, with the ſame conſcientious zeal, with which the crown ſhould uphold the juſt rights, and liberties of the people.

I come now conſider the unhappy ſcenes of trouble which took their riſe from this unfortunate conteſt. And here we muſt enlarge the ſcope of our reflections. We are

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no longer to charge the king with errors, or the parliament with encroachments, for the barriers which ſeparated the ſeveral branches of government were broken down. The king was limited and conſtrained, and the parliament deſerved not that honourable name, having loſt the reſpectable rank it ſhould ever hold, in the conſtitution of this country. We muſt now enter on the mortifying and humiliating taſk, of learning from the troubles which enſued, the common folly and infatuation of mankind. To what exceſs of miſery they are expoſed, when once they quit the rules of government and good order; thoſe neceſſary guides, which to a people collectively, ſhould hold the place of reaſon and judgment to the individual. The jarring intereſts and views of a divided people, will hurry them into anarchy, and from anarchy into guilt, with the ſame impulſe, with which the heated paſſions and affections of the mind, will drive the unhappy libertine through the ſeveral ſtages of his ruin.

Faction, ever active in its nature, hath all the advantage which diligence can give it, over the ſupineneſs, or rather, the honeſt want of ſuſpicion which becalms the mind of

patriotiſm. True patriotiſm is ſettled and compoſed; acts not until excited, acts defenſively alone, and when attacked. Faction gladdens at the encreaſe of trouble; patriotiſm delights in peace. We are not then at a loſs to name the prevailing ſpirit of the times before us, when we remark, that at the very period in which the grievances complained of were redreſſed, and the king had conſented to all the material acts propoſed to him, then began the great confuſion and attack which was made upon the hierarchy, in the firſt place, and in the next, upon monarchy itſelf.

In all public and political conteſts we may obſerve, that there are many who at firſt have no deſigns, and who would never of themſelves have raiſed diſturbances in the ſtate; yet ſeeing they are once raiſed, will turn them to their advantage; and render them ſubſervient to their private ends. New circumſtances inſpire new views, and lead on in the progreſs of diſcontent, to deſigns unthought of in its beginning. Many honeſt, and well-principled men, who had their ſhare in the origin of this confuſion, would have ſhrunk back with horror from the ſteps which they were then purſuing, could they poſſibly have foreſeen

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to what unſuſpected miſchief, and violence they gave occaſion. Here then a mortifying reflection is ſuggeſted, to the beſt friends of our eſtabliſhment in church and ſtate; the lovers of order, and good government muſt obſerve, with what care and circumſpection they ſhould move, even to the moſt laudable purpoſes; leſt they furniſh an handle to thoſe who have ill deſigns, and ſtand in need of fair pretences, and borrowed colours to conceal them. It is not from the common cry of a majority, that the real object of a factious party is to be learned. Had the true authors of this rebellion now declared themſelves, they would have united againſt them, not only the upright, juſt, and moderate part of mankind, but thoſe very parties alſo, which they afterwards made uſe of, as inſtruments to bring forward their deſigns.

The firſt object of thoſe who conceive miſchievous intentions againſt the public, is to deceive the honeſt and unſuſpecting people. Thus the enemies to civil government at this time, pretended a warm zeal for religion, in order to carry on their deſigns againſt the ſtate. Whilſt the enemies of the church, cried aloud for civil liberty, as a cover to

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their attempts againſt the hierarchy; each, for their own purpoſes, puſhing on the other, and eſpouſing the grievances of the other, as their own.

The majority of the people were yet royaliſts in their hearts, ſeeking only the redreſs of their immediate grievances. The preſbyterians, who aimed at the ſubverſion of the church, concealed their views by adopting the ſame object. But in the boſom of the preſbyterian party lay, the yet unſuſpected ſect, from whom all the fury of the ſtorm aroſe. Men whoſe principles were inconſiſtent in themſelves, and alſo repugnant to every idea of ſubordination and government: and who at firſt bore this teſtimony to the extravagance of their deſigns, that they concealed them, by affecting ſuch as were in conſcience rigid preſbyterians, and had bigotry enough to be blind to this deceit. Thus they alſo pretended to confine their views to the redreſs of public grievances alone. This juſt and conſtitutional object was made at once to ſerve the purpoſe of honeſt patriots, who were ſeeking the real intereſts of their country, of the preſbyterians who intended the ſubverſion of the hierarchy, and

and of this deſigning ſet of men, who aimed at the deſtruction of monarchy, and the hierarchy at the ſame time.

Men of known and decided opinions, I ſpeak almoſt without exception, may be made friends to the real intereſts of government. Becauſe ſhe knows in what manner to conſult their eaſe and welfare, and reconcile their intereſts with her own. But men of concealed, uncertain, and fluctuating tenets are to be watched. For it is not poſſible to ſay, what political miſchief may appear to them a reaſonable ſyſtem of conduct grounded on ſuch tenets, or become the miſtaken objects of religious, and conſcientious duty.

It is needleſs to enumerate the various meaſures of concealment at one time, of open avowal at another, purſued by theſe deſigning parties with the common view of abridging the king's authority. It is ſufficient to remark that they acted in concert more or leſs, as occaſion prompted them, until the ill-fated delivery of the king into the hands of the Engliſh. This was the neceſſary means of ſeparating them at once, as it rendered the poſſeſſion of his royal perſon, the deciſive occaſion of ſuperiority between

them. The preſbyterian party prevailing in parliament, and the independent in the army, the latter ſucceeded in this material point of advantage. And having joined the preſbyterians thus far in deſtroying the church, they now found themſelves enabled to compleat their triumph by the deſtruction of the king.

The veil was ſoon caſt off, and the party appeared in its true character and colours. Republican by profeſſion, becauſe the aſpect of ſuch a government the leaſt reſembled monarchy, and partook the leaſt of ſubordination in reſpect to the ranks of men; but they were anarchiſts in their hearts, and by their principles as unfit for a juſt and well ordered republic, as for the dominions of an abſolute deſpot. With reſpect to religion, pretending an averſion to every mode of form, becauſe they knew it was eſſential to the exiſtence of a national church; but in fact enemies to the ſpirit of truth itſelf, and dignifying with the borrowed name of toleration, a total diſregard to every ſyſtem of religious opinions.

We can not wonder if the folly and infatuation of man, thus raiſed to its higheſt pitch, ſhould now terminate in guilt

guilt of the blackeſt die: If ſuch a party, arrived by ſuch means, at the ſummit of power, above reſtraint or controul, ſhould deſtroy the ſmall remains of the conſtitution yet ſubſiſting. The faint ſhadow of a parliament was firſt expunged. And after law and juſtice had been mocked by the inſtitution of a committee, and an high court with powers unheard of, and pretenſions unparallel'd in all hiſtory; GOD and his religion were inſulted alſo by the barbarous murder of this unhappy prince. The feelings of humanity, the natural ſenſe of ſubordination amongſt men, the reverence due to the laws and conſtitution of their country, the dictates of morality, with the religious fear of GOD, were all included in the ſacrifice which this heated party made at once to their extravagance.

But, what is ſtrange! their political purpoſes were defeated in the ſame inſtant. They were the firſt victims of their incoherent meaſures, which led only to this obvious end, that the ſupreme authority which they had wreſted from the hands of a legal monarch, ſhould be placed in thoſe of a tyrant and uſurper. Who at the very outſet of his uſurpation, bore teſtimony to the value of every ordinance, this blinded party had pulled down: manifeſting the neceſſity of an

eſtabliſh-

eſtabliſhment both in church and ſtate, by immediately adopting them, ſo far as was conſiſtent with the nice and difficult part he muſt ſuſtain; amidſt the jarring intereſts of ſuch violent and contending parties.

An aſſembly of delegates, and a preſbyterian church, were the choſen inſtruments of his eſtabliſhment; employed however with that caution, with which he knew thoſe inſtruments ſhould be made uſe of in ſuch a ſeaſon. Little power was entruſted to the one, and a conſtant mortification laid upon the forward, and aſſuming ſpirit of the other. But he eſpecially made known his opinion, of the origin, and progreſs of the party which had raiſed him, by his active, and ſpirited conduct in his ſuppreſſion of the levellers. A ſet of men now riſing from amongſt the independents themſelves, as they had before ariſen from amongſt the preſbyterians; but exceeding if poſſible the wildneſs of their opinions. He had ability ſufficient to diſcover the firſt movements of this new political miſchief, and experience ſufficient to warn him of its progreſs and gradation. He well knew therefore the importance of reſtraining it by an early and effectual check.

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We can not wonder if the uſurper, who had ſeparated his intereſts from thoſe of every party then ſubſiſting, ſoon found his authority diſputed. The royaliſts had been his enemies throughout; the republicans became ſo from the moment of his ſeizing the reins of government; and the preſbyterians could as little brook his indifference to their covenant. He had placed himſelf at the head of the two laſt for the public ſervice; they were now grieved to diſcover that they had been acting as the inſtruments of his private views, and from the fair character they had aſſumed, of the aſſertors of public liberty, had become the tools of a ſelfiſh, and intolerable tyrant.

The folly of man ſeems now to have paſſed through all its ſucceſſive ſtages of extravagance, and in its courſe to have produced every poſſible miſchief, with which an infatuated nation can be afflicted. A lawleſs and undiſciplined army; an harraſſed and diſtracted people; the civil conſtitution overſet; the national church deſtroyed; their king depoſed, and put to death; and an uſurper raiſed upon his fall.

It muſt be an hardened, and obſtinate people, that will not profit by ſo ſevere a viſitation. I need ſcarcely add, that grown weary at length of theſe exceſſes, humbled by the weight of their ſufferings, and reduced to a proper ſenſe of their folly and guilt, they received with univerſal gratitude and joy, the bleſſing vouchſafed to them by the fatherly goodneſs of GOD; who reſtoring to them the ſon of their unfortunate monarch, reſtored at once the king to his prerogative, the parliament to its privileges, and the people to their liberties.

I may now conclude with the obſervation ſuggeſted at the beginning of this diſcourſe; that as civil ſubjects in the firſt place, and ſecondly as members of the church eſtabliſhed, we may turn the conſideration of theſe troubles to our account.

This unhappy prince, we muſt allow, moved perhaps by inclination at firſt, but certainly driven by neceſſity in the end, inclined to the increaſe of his prerogative. But if the parliament had juſt grounds of complaint againſt the king, they lay under as heavy an imputation on their part. Power was never exerciſed in this country in a more unwarrantable

warrantable and irregular ſhape, than by this very parliament; in ſome degree, when moved by their ſuſpicion, ſtill more as the preſbyterian party prevailed amongſt them; but moſt of all, as their complexion became independent. Should we admit the charge againſt the king, that he leaned towards the enemies of his national church; the parliament, if we may yet call it ſo, did more. They abſolutely deſtroyed it; filling the minds of the people with principles better ſuited to the abſurdity of their political alterations.

We have now therefore the experience which length of time and hiſtory convey, to teach us wherein the true medium of our intereſt lies. We have learned, that if the doctrines of popery incline us to the obedience of ſlaves, the doctrines of the independents are as ill calculated to render us good ſubjects. And in truth, the tranſactions of this period inform us, that the latter have been able to effect, what the former have but attempted but in vain. We are convinced that in reſpect to its civil claims, the church of England has ſhewn itſelf the trueſt friend to the real intereſts of mankind; equally maintaining both in profeſſion and practice, the moderation beſt ſuited to advance it. A principle of duty, for this very reaſon and

purpoſe

purpoſe enforced, as well by the precepts, as in the conduct of our great leader, and example, JESUS.

We are now more eſpecially called upon to give thanks to GOD, that the ſeaſonable mercies which healed the wounds of this afflicted people, have been continued, under a variety of manifeſtations even to our own time. The glorious Revolution hath confirmed to us the happy conſtitution in church and ſtate, thus marvellouſly preſerved at the Reſtoration. As far as religion is concerned, the memorable Act of Toleration hath removed the unhappy ground of ſuch diviſions; reconciling the moſt perfect freedom in religious opinions, with the ancient and venerable form of our eſtabliſhment. Laſtly, the acceſſion of the BRUNSWICK line hath enſured to us the enjoyment of theſe bleſſings. Upon the due and regular adminiſtration of law, depends the true liberty of the ſubject, which half-witted faction ſeeks in the violation and contempt of it. An uniform and unremitted regard to this great political truth, hath ever diſtinguiſhed the government of this illuſtrious HOUSE.

FINIS.